

The drinking water at Aviemore and ecosystem services in our National Parks

Description

Driving up to the northern Cairngorms yesterday to climb, protests by people in Aviemore about the disgusting taste of their drinking water was headline news on Radio Scotland.



Yesterday was a lovely day. Temperature inversion over Aviemore from the ski car park.

Scottish Water's response was technocratic, that they would introduce a different process in 2017 which should make the water taste better <http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/investment-and-communities/your-community/aviemore-2016>

There was not a mention that Aviemore is in a National Park or discussion about the role of the Cairngorms National Park in delivering clean water, which is usually included as one of the key ecosystem services delivered by the natural environment. This got me thinking – if we cannot deliver water to local residents in our National Parks that tastes as good as the water on the open hill, what hope have we got? Is talk about ecosystem services simply another term that is banded around by politicians from time to time to make people think they care about the natural environment?

The situation is complicated of course. The old water supply was piped in from Loch Einich and was not sufficient to guarantee supplies to the ever expanding village of Aviemore so a new supply from a borehole south of Aviemore was created in 2012. Here's what Scottish Water said at the time:

“It’s great to see the new works going into supply. It will benefit our customers in many ways. By using boreholes rather than a remote mountain loch as our source we can access and maintain the supply more easily, increase the capacity available to support economic growth and protect the sensitive Cairngorms environment.”

“Previously supplies received only basic treatment and no filtration. The old source was remote and was the environmentally sensitive Loch Einich in the Cairngorms connected via several miles of pipelines along the length of Glen Einich. The new borehole supply receives modern treatment using filters that remove impurities down to microscopic level”.

<http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/about-us/media-centre/news-archive/new-aviemore-wtw-goes-live> .

What I find intriguing is that according to Scottish Water water from boreholes should require less treatment than that flowing off the hill <http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/you-and-your-home/your-home/customer-factsheets/3-water-treatment>

Different sources of raw water

The treatment process that we use depends upon the type of water source and the quality of the raw water available in a particular area.

Water from springs and boreholes is generally of a higher quality and may only need simple filtering followed by disinfection.

Water from upland sources such as lochs, reservoirs and streams, will normally require some sort of treatment process.

The obvious question is why has all this gone wrong at Aviemore? Why is water from a borehole, which according to Scottish Water should require less treatment, now being treated more than the water that used to come from the open hill? The broader question is whether bodies such as Scottish Water, when they operate in our National Parks, could be thinking of new ways to deliver what they do.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. CNPA

2. natural environment
3. Scottish Water

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